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THE TWO TRAVELERS

CARLOTA MONTENEGRO

THE TWO TRAVELERS

THE
TWO TRAVELERS

A BOOK OF FABLES

CARLOTA MONTENEGRO

THE POET LORE COMPANY
BOSTON
1909

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TO MY SISTER SARA

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A BOOK OF FABLES

THE TWO TRAVELERS

I SAW a man some distance before me on the road that begins and ends with the flowing of a breath, that starts we know not whence, stops we know not where, and appears the same to no two travelers.

For a while the road was smooth and direct, but suddenly it grew rougher. The man came to a small rock: on the small rock he stumbled, so that I called him a fool.

He came to a shallow stream: Instead of clearing it at a bound, he fell into it and almost drowned so that again I called him a fool.

He came to a place where the road branched into two paths: he took one that led to a precipice, and crept back bleeding and moaning. So a third time I called him a fool.

He came to a crowd of mountebanks. After watching their antics for a while, he began to imitate them, and in a few minutes was capering like a buffoon. A fourth time I called him a fool.

He came to a picture representing a glorious

blue and golden sky filled with angels. He knelt down before it, prayed and fell asleep. Absurd fool! for worshiping a picture.

. . . . . .

A second man made his way along the same road. But this time the rock was loose set, and sharp pointed, so that when this traveler stumbled and was hurt, I pitied him.

This time the stream was wide, deep, and turbulent, so that when he sank into it and saved himself only after frantic struggles, again I pitied him.

This time the signboard could not be deciphered because the light from the dangerous path fell on it in such a way as to obliterate the warning: so again I pitied the man with the bewildered, frightened eyes and the breast smeared with blood that seemed to have come through from his very heart.

This time the mountebanks did not seem to be really mountebanks; besides, they compelled the traveler to fall into their ways. Instead of calling him a fool I applauded him.

This time the picture was so beautiful, so peaceful and happy, and the real scenes on all sides of the road so confused, so wretched and despairing, that when the traveler

dropped on his knees before the transcendent sky and rejoicing angels and began to pray I did not call him absurd. I knew that his heart was full of a tragic yearning, and shedding profoundly sorrowful tears, I pitied him.

The second traveler was myself.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

EVERYBODY was thronging to the famous studio to purchase the beautiful statues. In row after row of gleaming marble stood graceful, seductive nymphs; proud, flawless goddesses; lithe young girls; and queens crowned with their own regal beauty. The sculptor called them "My women without hearts." And truly, a heart was all these wonderful creatures lacked. When the bidding commenced there was a furore: fabulous sums were offered for the exquisite pieces. "But wait," said the sculptor, "you will need to bid higher still. Look in that corner where that cloth is hanging; the real gem is there."

"Let us see it," cried the people.

The sculptor removed the cloth. The crowd protested in disappointment. They beheld the statue of a woman with a plain face and an angular figure. The marble was grayish, the workmanship crude.

"Cover it up!" cried a man who had bought the most beautiful statue in the room. "She looks like a scarecrow among these others.

"Did you ever see a woman who resembled her?" asked the sculptor.

"Yes, hundreds," was the cry.

"My sister looks like her," thought a boy who was leaning against the statue of a voluptuous nymph.

"My mother stands in the same timid fashion and has just such a figure," thought another man; he had his arm around a rather heavy-limbed, somewhat full-lipped Venus.

"She looks like my wife," occurred to a third purchaser. And he turned away to gaze once more at the charming statue he had bought, which held a mirror so close to her face that her beauty was almost obscured.

"Hide that ugly thing, Mr. Sculptor," some one else shouted.

"Bid, gentlemen!" cried the sculptor. There was a general laugh.

"Thus *I* bid," said one of his patrons, and picking up a bronze weight from a table, he flung it directly at the ugly image, which toppled and fell from its pedestal with a terrific crash. But the noise was followed by a ringing note which swelled into an exquisite concord of sweet sounds, as if all the virtues had suddenly burst into song.

Something flashed from the midst of the wreck: it was a heart of pure gold.

THE REVELATION

TWO people sat side by side, a man and a woman. Their arms were intwined, their hands clasped; he was speaking softly, simply, as love speaks; she was listening as a woman listens to love,— her lips quivered, they were parted, and the breath came quickly, warmly, through them. Her eyes were clear, moist, and shining; a beautiful, unsullied world was opened to her sight, a world wherein were innumerable flowers that drooped languidly in the fragrance of their own gracious sighs; where birds sang as if a crystal fountain were gushing in their throats; where, in a sky limpid and blue as a maiden's eye, hung clouds that blushed like a maiden's cheek. In the midst of this flawless beauty, she saw a figure moving, moving joyously and securely and proudly, yet wonderingly. It was the queen of this fair world, it was herself.

Still he was murmuring those half intelligible phrases, too light for the burden of a meaning, too quickly breathed to be all noted,

too artful for any safe defense. How the woman listened! how more and more deeply was her soul stirred! how more and more beautiful grew the world over which she beheld herself ruling!

Suddenly with those clear, moist, happy eyes, she saw to the very depths of the man's mind. In an instant the fair world changed—it shrank to a narrow, lonely road, it darkened to a dim, cloudy twilight; in it she still saw herself moving, but now, with head bowed, like one who is ashamed, and with hands bound, like one who is a slave.

AWAY WITH SIMPLICITY

TOM was hurrying along when he met John. "John," he cried, "have you read Dick's book?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?"

"It is a simple, pleasing tale."

"Oh, oh, oh! a simple tale? You are mistaken; it is a marvelous, subtle creation; there's a whole philosophy, a whole religion in that book and you call it simple. At first I thought as you did, but after reading it seven or eight times I began to realize the profundity of it. For instance, what do you suppose sky means in that story?"

"Sky," answered John, wondering.

"No, no, indeed. Sky does not mean sky, water does not mean water, man does not mean man, beast does not mean beast, but — are you in a hurry, John?"

"No, I am never in a hurry."

"Well, I always am. Life is not as simple as it looks. There is so much crowding upon one from behind, so much rushing away from

one in front. But I will snatch a few moments to explain this complex and marvelous tale of Dick's."

When the explanation was over, John stood staring before him in a dazed fashion. "Now it all seems different, doesn't it?" asked Tom, taking out his watch.

"Yes, different," murmured John.

"No longer just a simple, pleasing tale, eh? Well, I must away. Things are crowding from behind and rushing on in front. Life is not a simple affair — yes, to the animals, but to the thinkers, what an interesting turmoil. Oh, I wouldn't have missed Dick's book! Read it again, read it any number of times, and suddenly the whole glorious meaning will come to you."

That night, John met Dick. "Hello!" he cried. "Have you read Tom's book?"

"Tom's book? Has Tom written a book?"

"Oh, yes, a marvelous tale, containing a whole philosophy, a whole religion. A wonderful book in which sky does not mean sky, water does not mean water, man does not mean man, beast does not mean beast —"

"What a strange book! I will read it."

"But mind, not once. I have read it half a dozen times."

"Perhaps that fact explains your confused, bewildered manner. Now I think it would do you good to look into my book. You will need to read it only once, for it means just what it says. Come, take a walk."

"Would love to, but haven't time, Dick, life is not a simple thing. Things are rushing from me behind and crowding toward me in front — I must hurry. Good by."

THE AWAKENING

AUTUMN was sending her last smile through the thinning woods; faint lights fell over everything. Far in the distance a mist hung above the river. Everywhere there seemed to be castles in the air. Under a beech tree with its beautiful low branches and mottled trunk sat a girl of eighteen. Her small hands were folded in her lap and her innocent eyes turned slowly from point to point of the quiet, exquisite woods; now gazing at the tree trunks, standing so tall and so many, now at the golden-colored road running on and on, now at the steely glitter of water on the other side of the sumach. Up from the ground came a perfume, fresh and vital; up through the half-blackened and the still red leaves; up from the creek with its ferns and its small waterfall; and a fainter fragrance as if from the softly rolling clouds, from the slowly unfolding shadows, and from the long, pale, changing rays of gold and yellow, that crept around behind the trees, lingered pensively in a thousand timid

patches, and fled with the brushing of a branch.

Oh, the soul of that young girl! So long it had slumbered, through all the unintelligible clatter of life around her. And now, on this mystic afternoon, in the autumn woods, where all was so still, so veiled, so drowsy, the childish soul stirred in its cradle of dreams and awaked — to the first sense of wonder, of yearning, of regret; to the first sense of something sweet, strangely near and distant; to the first quiver of disquiet. A peculiar hurry fell upon her heart and also a desire to resist. Tears came to the innocent eyes. "Something can never be. What? Why can it never be?" These were the thoughts in the newly awakened soul. A flash of blinding light that showed nothing, fell upon her eyes.

Patter, patter, was heard from time to time on the carpet of leaves — still other brown leaves. The perfume exhaled in a fuller breath from all quarters. The note of a whip-poor-will from deep, deep down in a slumbering hollow sounded sorrowfully through the unexpectant air. There was incessantly the plashing song of the lonely rock-strewn creek. Backwards and forwards moved the shadows, now touched with light, now gray as

the wing of a bat. Far in the distance were the beautiful castles. Where? Among those trees? No. Across that river? No. Beyond those clouds? No! Where is the road that leads to them?

The first sense of wonder, of yearning, of regret in the soul of a young girl — the first throb of desire, of disquiet, of resistance. And far, far off through the mystic, pathless woods, the enchanted castles.

THE DREAMER

A BAND of young men met together for the last time before setting out in the world. They discussed their ambitions. "I will never rest," said one, "until I possess enough wealth to make my name immortal." "And I will never be content until I own a palace," said another. "Nor I until I win for my wife a woman famous for wit and beauty," declared a third. 'And I will never be content until I am the father of a son, perfect in body and brilliant in mind," said a fourth. "Nothing will satisfy me," confessed a fifth young man, "except the friendship of emperors and kings, and I mean to win it."

"So our motto is 'Work,'" they cried, with the enthusiasm of youth, "indefatigable, unflagging work." They were about to drink a toast to their motto when one of the young men whispered, "Who is that fellow yonder?" In a corner sat a man with smiling eyes and lips. His head was resting on his soft, white hand, his whole attitude was relaxed, he was gazing off into the distance.

"Our motto is 'Work,'" the youths repeated, turning to the stranger. "Will you drink our toast?"

"No," said the man langourously, "I cannot drink your toast; I am a dreamer."

"What, and here in our company!" cried the youths. "A dreamer indeed! A good-for-nothing! In the future, when you have nothing but rags, come to us, dreamer, and we will help you. But now leave us!" And they took the man by the shoulders and thrust him from the room.

Many years passed. The band of ambitious men, no longer young, met together again. Some of them were broken spirited, some of them were worn looking, one or two seemed satisfied.

They began to talk of what they had accomplished. "I am called the richest man in my native town," said one proudly. "And I am building a substantial country house," said another. "I have not yet won the beautiful, witty woman," said a third, "but I have not yet given up." "My son," said a fourth, "is as sound in body as a nut, but as stupid as a bat." "I have succeeded fairly well," acknowledged a fifth. "I am not the confidant of emperors and kings, but I am the

mayor of my town and everybody respects me."

"Do you remember when we met so many years ago," they asked. "Our motto then was 'Work.' This time let us make it 'Rest.'"

Again as they were about to toast their new motto, they noticed a man sitting contentedly in a corner. He was much younger than they; he was almost a youth.

"Our motto is 'Rest,'" they said. "Will you join us in our toast?"

"Yes," he answered eagerly, in a fresh, happy voice, and drank with them. The men clasped his hand warmly and drew him into their circle. He invited them to go with him to his home. Upon reaching his gates, he fitted into the lock an unsubstantial-looking key the color of mist. The gates swung open as noiselessly as shadows moving. "I am the only one who can unlock them," the host said, smiling.

The men found themselves in magnificent grounds in the center of which stood a palace. "This is my home," said the host. "I have lived here all my life." As they drew near the house, a woman of extraordinary beauty, leaning on the arm of a handsome youth,

advanced to meet the guests. "My wife," said the host, "and my son." They entered the palace; everywhere were evidences of fabulous wealth. They were led through room after room, each surpassing the other in gorgeousness. At last, they came to a salon whence laughter and music issued. They went inside. Amusing themselves in various ways were no lesser people than emperors and kings. When they saw the owner of the house, they called to him familiarly and one of them, folding him in his arms, bestowed upon him the title of brother.

The men were abashed and dumfounded. They began to look questioningly at one another. At last one of them approached their host and touched him respectfully on the arm. "Who are you," he whispered timidly, "that you should possess all this? Who are you that you should live in a palace, be the master of inestimable wealth, the husband of an incomparable woman, the father of a glorious son, and the friend and equal of emperors and kings?"

The host looked smilingly at the questioner. "We have met before," he said languidly; "I am the dreamer."

IN THE SHADOW

A GREAT poet whose verses rang with the praises of woman, was recognized at last, showered with gold and crowned with the shining laurel.

With his gold and his wreath he hurried to the woman who loved him. He found her, as always, waiting for him in his study. She was hardly visible, the light about her was so dim. But the moment he entered, the room became illuminated with the shafts of glory that fell from his wreath. This radiance focused itself dazzingly upon the unfinished poems on his desk; it gilded his chair, his picture; it transformed his worn coat hanging on the wall. It glided up to the the woman, but there it stopped, leaving her in the shadow.

" My constant, beautiful star, my inspiration," cried the poet, " I bring thee the fruit of my labor." Then he filled her lap with gold, and clasped her to him, imprinting on her lips a kiss that thrilled him and fired his

brain with new thought. But he noticed that her humble eyes, with their generous depths that always sought his when he embraced her, were now lifted above to the wreath he wore. She freed herself from his arms and stood up beside him — shoulder to shoulder, brow to brow. The gold dropped unheeded from her lap and rolled off into the corners of the room.

"What is it, my beloved," he cried; "do you not want the gold? It means jewels, laces, all the coquettish cravings of a woman's heart."

She did not answer, but raised the wreath from his head and put it on her own.

"Does it become me?" she asked, smiling proudly.

"No, no!" he cried. "Take it off! You are fairer to me without it. Your beauty and the soul in your eyes are your crown, as they have been my inspiration."

He took the wreath from her and recrowned himself. As he did so, she reached up timidly with great yearning in her faithful eyes, as if to pluck but one leaf. Laughing he quickly drew away. The light followed him, but about the woman the shadow fell more deeply.

THE SNOW STORM

A HEAVENFUL of white stars is falling: I dash out in the midst of them. They arouse something wild in me; something cool and wild, not fierce and hot and wild. Straight through those soft falling fragments I walk, I run headlong, I do not fear; they do not hurt, they only kiss the cheek or the hair.

It is a dizzy scene and my mind grows fantastic. I begin to long for something that never can return or for something to be that never was.

These are the souls of raindrops, I think. Then, no! They are elves from the moon, or the kisses of angels. Again, no! They are envoys from the throne of God, promising the bounty of Spring, for there is a fountain of strength in them that flows towards fruitfulness and falls into the strength of the earth.

At this point, a bird high up on a black branch begins to sing: once more the fantastic — these flakes with wings of air are the souls of dreams and that is the expression of

them, that is their voice, that pure, prolonged, vanishing note. What a song! What a slender thread of sweetness! A stream of dew might tinkle so. It is timid, fresh, and young; pure, high, and clear. No, it is not the expression of a dream: it is more virile. It is a greeting across the snow to Spring—all at once I seem to see those changeable, green, live eyes of hers peeping here and there between the ever-parting, ever-closing curtain falling through the air. How it all serenades my soul! and as sweet music brings tears, so now my joy is subdued. Not as they left the cloud do the flakes come: they turn, retreat, and twist; a devious way is theirs. The wind blows up, and back again they go. They slip against and avoid one another in the most intricate whirl that was ever seen, but at last here they come, down, down, down to earth, to the rest — all the way from the clouds. And I think, we too, we who sing of the snow and watch it fall and watch it melt, we too, after so many waverings sink down to earth, to the rest.

Suddenly I long to throw myself prone, to be covered with the snow and seem white, to hide the stains of wayfaring and seem what I have dreamed. What is beneath that heap

over there? Only more snow? No, only something black and crooked and worn — an old warped plank; you know it and I know it; so why lie under the snow?

The unrestrained whirling goes on, the whiteness deepens and spreads. But my spirits are withdrawing from the fantastic revelry, from the dance of the pure, white elves, from the touch of the fleeting, sweet kisses, from the song of the flute-throated bird. My face is death cold. There through the window flashes the firelight, there shines the hearth. It calls me. I long for it and hasten toward it.

Never did the leaping flames glow with a kinder welcome.

THE RICH MAN'S COFFIN

A MAN who was steadily increasing his money bags so that he was known over the whole world as the second Crœsus, went out into the forest one day and planted a sapling.

He proceeded solemnly because he intended to use the trunk of the tree for his coffin.

The next day he went away to foreign lands, and everywhere the flash of gold heralded and followed him. His possessions, if heaped together, would have disturbed the equilibrium of the universe.

Twenty years passed. One day he became ill and was told that his end was approaching. He recalled the tree from which his coffin was to be fashioned and began to wonder about it — did it live or had it perished? "Unlucky sapling," he thought, "If you have survived, you are doubtless stunted and gnarled, planted as you were under such dismal auspices and destined for such a mournful end."

He set out at once for his native land, so

heavy and disturbed at heart that the triumphant, joyful beauty of sky and land seemed wantonly cruel.

As soon as he reached home, he hurried to the forest to seek the tree. He had scarcely entered the woods when an unrestrained sound of merry-making greeted him; it proceeded from an open plot where a group of revellers were tripping the may-pole dance around a magnificent forest king. All the other trees leaned toward it as people incline to the hour's favorite. Connected with it was a remarkable fact — from the massive trunk, tremendous branches shot out in all directions laden with fruit about to ripen, and only from the trunk grew such branches. Towards the nearly ripe clusters, all the gay, dancing crowd was looking with smiling, expectant eyes.

Suddenly, a mellow, unearthly voice, as pleasant to the ear as the song of a siren, became audible from the midst of the thick upper leaves.

"Planted in a goodly hour," it chanted, "and towards a goodly end, I have flourished, and soon ye shall reap the harvest, all ye that wait."

Upon hearing this, the man went up closer

to the wonderful tree. He staggered back as though he had been stricken to the heart. Where the fruitful branches grew out from the bark, he saw, as on a tombstone, in his own carving, his own name. It was his sapling, waiting to serve his death.

SERVANT AND MASTER

I AM nothing but my coat. The tails turned back and the buttons tagging me with their insolent glitter,— these marks give men the right to call me in any tone they please, familiarly, angrily, or surlily, or to command me to their bidding. I do not own my coat, my dark green, softly finished coat; it owns me: I do not put it on; it throws itself over me. I cannot escape it; I might as well try to run from my own feet. Of my individuality, it has usurped all the rights, all the expressions. Thus it commands:

Be servile.

Hold your arms stiff and your head straight, like a thing of wood.

Look at nothing but your master's interests: you have none.

Keep a 'thank you' on the end of your tongue and let it slip modestly off into your master's ear, whether for something, as it seems to him, or for nothing, as it seems to you.

Step lightly through the mansion, that you

may, as it were, come and go without yourself.

If you have a mind, and your master none, use yours as if it were his, in his behalf.

See nothing but your duty, hear nothing but your commands, remember nothing but these, and you and I shall become each other.

Thus says the coat with the lapped-back tails and the glittering buttons.

And my master — *he* is nothing but his coat. But oh! what a different thing is his coat. Although it is plainer than mine, the pockets bulge with rights and liberties, some of which belong to me. But my coat has no pockets for such things, only space for the unmistakable buttons.

Does my master speak? The whole world listens and applauds, though it hears nothing. Do I speak other than, "No, sir," "Yes, sir," "Dinner is served," "A gentleman has called," "The carriage waits," my coat-tails fly up and slap me in the mouth, reminding me, not who I am, but who I am not.

My master's head is as empty as his pockets are full; but what does that matter? The judgment of the world travels no farther than those same pockets. He juggles with all that is sacred,— with honor, with virtue, with

godliness; he breaks the commandments, yes, shatters those things beyond price; but if I crack a platter I am called to account.

I am not a man, I am not a soul, I am not a living thing; I am but a rag to take liberties with, a display of brass buttons. I am nothing but my coat.

THE TRUE GIFT

A YOUTH, walking one day on the bank of a broad stream, found a seed which seemed to have fallen from the clouds. He picked it up and looked around for a place in which to plant it, but every spot of ground had already been seized upon by other planters; so he carried a handful of dirt to a rock and in it embedded the seed. People who saw him do this laughed at him and showed him their own flourishing plants. "Ours were but seedlings a moment ago, and behold! they have already put forth leaves. Yours will never grow."

At these words, which rang only too true, a pain shot through his heart. Yet he came each day to the rock and toiled in whatever way seemed best for the nursling hidden there.

For a long time the others pointed him out and laughed at him, but at last they grew used to the silent, unobtrusive, busy figure and ceased to notice him. Besides, a number of their own plants had grown large, flat,

glistening leaves, and some of them had even bloomed. This caused a general interest and delight, nor did the fact that these plants were all very much alike in leaf and flower and all breathed the same perfume, detract from the praise they won and the pleasure they gave.

At last the seed on the rock sent one little yellowish, green leaf into the air; slowly another appeared, then another. The owner was beside himself with joy; while others were exulting over tall flowering bushes, he who had despaired so often of any fruit of his labor, went into ecstasies over a few timid leaves. Now began the real fight, the fight to keep the plant alive; in drenching rain and in burning sun he visited it, sheltered it and tended it with sublime patience. One great obstacle to its growth was the shade cast by the other plants.

Years went by: the same familiar perfume could be detected on the banks of the stream, the stream itself flowed calmly on, and still the patient man, no longer young, watched and worked over his delicate plant, and still it had not bloomed. One morning with a dejected heart, he went again to the rock — he staggered back, grew pale, and began to

tremble all over. The plant had bloomed, and what a flower! What a perfume! There was nothing else like it. The people, detecting the strange fragrance, began to crowd about it. All the other plants were neglected. The wind suddenly changed and blew against them cruelly, so that soon the air was full of petals that whirled a moment in sight, then fell into the stream and were carried away by the current. At last there was only one flower left — the flower on the rock. And it seemed to partake of the nature of the rock itself; for no matter how the wind blew, it remained firm on its stem, and continued to pour out its perfume, to mingle its exquisite essence with the steadily flowing waters and to be unchangingly fresh and beautiful.

A FANTASY

HE played — with marvelous rapidity and delicacy his fingers flew over the enthralled keys. The piano began to sing and I began to dream. I saw a stream in a wood; along its border were tall trees with heavy foliage; off in the distance there seemed to be wonderful houses, but they were only more trees. The seclusion was deep, the silence unbroken. I stood with my hands clasped and looked into the water; it flowed past me with a white twinkle; always it curved the same grasses that grew in its way and left fresh bubbles upon them. There was not a sound. Suddenly something slipped from the sky into the stream — a star. Under the surface it began to float with the easy motion of a bubble, and the water began to tremble and to flash forth light; and what a sound everywhere! First a murmur, then music; the waves touched each other to harmony, to a vivid note with a lucid echo; the grasses coiled around one another and sent out a whistling strain as

clear as a lark's; the flowers quivered from stem to dew-ringed edge and their quivering was a song. Under the surface of the water the star floated on and the rays of its light were tuneful. And the waters of the stream were as clear as crystal and as pure as snow. But soon there began to rise a mist over everything; the music began to fade, and the star; and bubbles began to form upon everything, upon the beautiful star itself, upon the grasses, upon the flowers — thick upon everything; the whole stream was beaded with them. At last of the divine melody there was nothing left; the only sound was a slow rustling in the grass as from tired wings and a sigh as from weary lips; for as soon as the bubbles formed they burst with a ghost of a sound which became audible now that the music of the star had ceased. Crash! The last strain! deafening applause! and I awoke from my dream, my dream of a stream and a star.

The stream — life. The star — love.

THE ARTIST

IT is a chill December night near Christmas. Through the broken window of a dingy atelier enters the sound of crunching snow and merry sleigh-bells, and a cold wind and the moonlight.

In one corner of the workshop, a young man sits huddled. His head hangs limp as if he could never lift it again, as though a terrible blow had fallen on his neck and broken it; his hands lie open lifelessly as if something had just dropped out of them. The moonlight, wavering about the broken furniture and the black, gaping fireplace, seeks him, lingers for a moment in his staring eyes, and slips aside; the wind circles playfully around him, blows its chill breath on his sunken temples and hollow cheeks and whirls away singing.

Above the man is suspended a mirror cracked across from side to side. For months past a slowly changing, for days past, a rapidly changing, face has been reflected in it; to-night, a hollow-eyed, starved, despairing blur of features.

Over in one corner is a statue, an early work, of pure white marble, gracefully wreathed and triumphant looking. There is a smile on the youthful lips; but hanging from the wall is a cobweb which has floated across the smiling lips and clings to them. The statue is named Hope.

The moon bursts with sudden, cold brightness into the room; a rumbling blast of wind drives through it; the bells jingle more sharply and a chorus of laughs from a flying sleigh leaves its brief, musical echo in the crisp night. The man rises, slowly he lifts his head, the veins on the temples are swollen — he has been thinking. He drags along to a table, he opens the lid of a tin box — empty! no bread! He goes to the fireplace — empty! He opens his purse — Empty! empty! he looks into his heart — empty! no hope! For a moment he stands like one of his own statues — he is thinking, thinking; suddenly his face changes — a bright flush leaps into the hollow of his cheeks, a sparkle into his eyes; his hand slips slowly, stealthily along toward an object that glitters in the cold moonlight. He takes it up; he raises it a little higher — quickly.

The sleigh glides back like a bright phantom

THE POINT OF VIEW

A STREAM wound through a beautiful wood where in the early spring, the anemone peeped; in midsummer the tall ferns bent their stately heads to sip the flashing water; and in autumn, the drifting leaves brightly crossed one another as they sank through the soft flowing air.

One morning, the warm sun dipped into the stream, and lo! a white cloud floated up from the water and began to sail away.

The stream sighed, "Thou art the child of my bosom, O beautiful cloud! I am the source and yet I am left here in this quiet wood while thou hast been lifted high above me. Thou hast been chosen to wander far and see the beautiful world."

"Good by," murmured the cloud, and glided joyfully away. It rose higher and higher until the stream lost sight of it. One morning, the stream was pushing its meditative way through sun and shadow. It was thinking of the cloud. Suddenly a gentle breeze sprang up; there was a slight darkening

of the sky and the cloud returned to the stream in tears.

"Why didst thou return?" asked the stream.

"I desired it," sighed the cloud.

"But wilt thou be happy here in this quiet wood after what thou hast seen?"

"Yes, and because of what I have seen," answered the cloud.

"And what was that?" asked the stream. "Begin! It will take a thousand seasons to tell it all."

"Not so," answered the cloud. "As thou knowest, I rose high so that I could look far and wide over all that is. I beheld only this — streams that longed to be floating with the clouds, or clouds that yearned to be flowing with the streams."

THE FIRST STEP

WHEN he was at the beginning he heard a voice say, "Take the first step. Art thou afraid because thou see'st no road? Thou wilt never see the road. Whether ditch or greensward, water or land, darkness or light, whether what thou hopest or what thou fearest, lies before thee, who can say? Thou mayest not stop; yet all thy going is but a step. Therefore thou canst not weary.

"The world moves under thee, the sky moves over thee, and ever the world is fresh and the sky is new. All things in nature push to some point; slowly, inevitably, they launch toward the limit. And the limit lies in the circumference of a circle. The clouds start, proceed, and burst, start, proceed, and burst, ever true to themselves and their uses. The streams fill and flow, fill and flow, eternally giving drink to the universe. But neither its path on the sky knows the cloud nor its course on the earth knows the river, and each is the other. The circle, forever

the circle. And neither can stop. The motion forever. And neither wearies, having nothing to do with then or after, only with now.

"Art thou less than a handful of water that becomes a cloud or a cloud that becomes water? Hast thou with the living soul no mission? Dost thou fear to stumble? Dost thou fear to see the blood drip from thy heart? But the world may need a bleeding heart — thy mission then is a bleeding heart. Take the first step and fear not what is before thee."

Thus spake the voice. Thus at the beginning was he emboldened and prepared.

THE QUESTION

AN ambitious and religious young statesman stood beside the coffin of a dead friend, and, that he might act in accordance with custom, he let a cold tear drop on the livid marble face between whose lips the breath had so miraculously ceased to flow, from whose rigid brow a chill seemed to rise and float through the room.

Annihilated! Prone forever! Cold with a cold like no other! An empty shell! How did the spark of life leave? Who saw it issue from those onetime moving eyes? or from those onetime eloquent lips? What happened to quench it? A little time, to-day or to-morrow, and I too ——

But such were not the reflections of the man who stood beside the corpse. These were his thoughts:

" Here now, from the hand of a dead man, comes my chance. He has fallen from the ladder and I am elected to climb from his last foothold; quick work to the top! Yet, but a short time ago for me there was nothing.

I am destined to win while still in the flower of youth. God is good, God is just; He has looked into my heart, when, how often? Who knows? But always He has seen there my unabandoned purpose, my strength to fight, and better than all, my unwavering trust in Him. Yes, God is just."

His whole future seemed to burst into bloom before his eyes, and so entrancing was the vision, that he began to smile as though he were at a wedding feast. Suddenly a hiss seemed to spurt up from the depths of the stagnant silence; the lips of the dead man appeared to part and to speak:

"In the flower of my youth I was cut down; in the fulness of my strength came the weakness of death, in the fulness of my faith in God as the One who would help me to ascend into the light of fame, came the slip of my foot and the plunge into darkness. Has God dropped my hand to take yours? Why? Has He stricken me to save you? Why?"

This last word seemed to roll around the room like ghostly thunder and then to drop like lead into the mind of the living man. And always thereafter when good befel him, he accepted it humbly, for again there echoed within his thoughts the dead man's question, "Why?"

PRIMROSES

THERE was a time when I lived what I have called " My primrose days." With the freshness and the brightness of that flower they return to me in memory. I was so young then in all my being, so crisp in soul, so new in dreams, that my life was a fantasie. When the first rays of morning unrolled across the sky and over the earth, in the pure abandon of innocence, when the first thrillingly clear notes of the birds began to pipe high up in the trembling boughs, when not a footstep had disturbed the dew, it was my custom from which nothing could stay me to go to my haunt in the woods where the primroses grew. I was bidden thither by my spirit, which then was fresh and kindred to the wild free breath, to the glittering dew, to the golden beauty of morning and the flower.

Then, to live was enough; I had to seek nothing; everything sought me, for my soul was like a young queen — to it all impressions paid eager homage and all came in their

richest, fairest guise. Then, the grasses trembled for me with a peculiarly joyous trembling I have never seen since, the breeze came whistling to me, jauntily touched my cheek, and puffed its fragrance in my face with the wanton spirit of a satyr. My blood bounded more and more joyously, until I seemed to be floating in a floating heaven. What air, what colors, what songs of birds! What piercing glances into the fathomless, sphynx-souled distances! What smiles fluttering up from my glad being, like the warm air simmering above the sleeping grass. What has happened? But I will not look into that. . . .

But all this beauty communed with me, it kept telling me, telling me over and over, to stand on tiptoe and look far off, even to the wonderful spot whither the perfumes floated and the clouds sailed and the birds took flight — Ah! how I listened. "It is there," it whispered. Ah! how I believed.

And then, everywhere I looked, everywhere I stepped, in those wonderful mornings, were primroses, bright, fresh, glittering, golden, encrusted with dew and filled with dreams.

GOOD WISHES

THREE men, a philosopher, a philanthropist, and a preacher, were walking along the high road to fame. They went with considerable hurry and some elation.

"I should die happy," said the philanthropist, "if I could see all men alike deserving and alike rewarded."

"And I should live happily if such a miracle could come to pass," said the philosopher.

"And I would give my life," said the preacher, "if I could see one man who has been martyred in soul and body by want, completely atoned to by good fortune."

In this zealous strain the three advocates for the welfare of humanity continued to talk, all the time advancing toward the stately, elevated house of fame whose golden windows flashed far and wide, whose courtyard, set thick with marble statues, rang with the blare of a triumphal chorus.

Suddenly the three pedestrians stopped short. On the edge of the road lay the body

of a man. He was half dead, his temples were bleeding, his face was ghastly, he had been crucified by want. In the last moment of despair he had sought to destroy himself. The three benefactors gathered him into their arms, resuscitated him in body and spirits, and sent him away with a generous purse and good wishes. As he crept down a dark, crooked by-road, looking back from time to time with grateful, wondering eyes, they turned aside from one another and began to weep, gently, half pleasantly, half sadly.

Years passed. The philosopher who had furthered the cause of justice, the preacher who had fostered the teachings of Christianity, and the philanthropist who had mitigated the sufferings of his fellow men, had finally reached the house of fame.

They had scarcely entered the door when they were met by a man who uttered a joyful cry of recognition. His dress was so rich it dazzled the travelers. He drew them eagerly in, and embracing them fervently, pressed a bagful of treasure into their hands. His eyes were radiant, he was trembling with delight.

" Who is he ? " the three men questioned of one another. Then suddenly, as they stared into his face they knew him. He was the

man they had found dying on the edge of the road when they were half way to the house of fame. The deeply engraven lines of anguish and the scars in the temple were plainly visible. How incongruously his face, in spite of its present smile, contrasted with his own splendid apparel and the proud faces and equipment of all the rest.

A sensation of poignant regret contracted the big hearts of the philanthropist, the preacher, and the philosopher; a sensation of disgust that the destitute creature they had stooped to on the by-path should have preceded them on the road to fame. They turned aside and began to weep, but this time, sullenly, bitterly.

The man looked at them in wonder for a moment, then suddenly his smile vanished, the old sorrowful look returned to his wasted features, a new and deeper anguish to his eyes — he understood their tears.

A WONDERFUL LOVE

A MAN loved a young and beautiful woman; he loved her so that the thought of living without seeing her bewitching sparkling eyes, her soft red lips, her dazzling skin, her shining hair, sent a chill through his heart as though the hand of death had laid hold of him.

"Merciful heavens!" he cried, "how I love her!" And yet this torturing doubt. Does she love me for my wealth or does she love me for my soul — for that which is I, inseparably and eternally?"

This question tormented him day and night. At last he decided to put her to the test. He went to her. "I am not the rich man you thought me," he cried. "I am poor. I cannot give you gold nor jewels; but though I have lost my wealth I am the same person. My heart, my soul, that which is I eternally, I still offer you. Will you marry me?"

The beautiful creature smiled but answered nothing. The next day some one came to see him — a woman. Her face was pale and

gray, her lips drawn, her hair lusterless, her eyes dim and sorrowful. She approached him and laid her hand on his shoulder; he shrank from her touch.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"The woman you love."

He stared at her in amazement. "The woman I love is young, beautiful. Her skin is satin to the touch, dazzling to the sight; her eyes are two stars that set my heart on fire, her lips—"

"I am she," the woman answered. "I love you. I have lost the glittering jewel of my beauty — I cannot give you that. But my heart, my soul, that which is I eternally, I still offer you." As she finished speaking, she threw herself on her knees before him, but he cast her off.

She arose, put off her disguise, and standing before him as beautiful as ever, began to laugh softly and mockingly. He also laughed and started to seize her in his arms.

"Fool! Egotist!" she cried, and was gone.

TOO LATE

THERE was once a bird in a cage. Long ago it had warbled so brilliantly and so happily that the lark came down from the heavens to listen. The bird sang:

"Wait a little while, oh, high white clouds.
"Wait a little while, oh, shining sun.
"Wait a little while, sweet flowers in the grass.
"Wait a little while, long, blossoming boughs.
"Wait a little while, soft-rustling, far-wandering stream.
"They will open the door and I shall be free and I will come to you — you who call me — you towards whom I yearn. Yes, I will come, and in the meanwhile I will sing."

Over and over this bird with the flashing plumage, the sparkling, merry eye, and the melodious trilling throat sang the song,—

"Wait clouds and sun and sweet flowers and blooming boughs and gurgling stream. Wait for me. I will come."

Long ago the bird ceased to sing. It began to droop, to stand in one corner, to look dully about — only from time to time it chirped in a silly fashion. One day it was startled. It gave a faint scream and began to flutter wildly against the bars. It had seen the shadow of death passing near the cage and the hand that guarded the door fall away lifeless. And next morning, behold! the door was wide open and around the bird's neck hung a golden key, with this inscription on it — " I open the whole world to you."

A quiver passed through the bird's feathers — it came slowly forth and peeped out. Then it went back into its corner. This it did over and over again until mustering courage finally it flew into the illimitable air and perched upon an apple branch starred all over with white blossoms. But the fragrance overpowered it, the sun shone too fiercely, the clouds were bewildering, the stream, swinging its silver bend around the beech trees, was too cold, too wide. The bird began to sing — a few notes — " Wait-a-little-while." The lark that used to circle down from the heavens to listen now darted up from the dewy hedge near by without even a glance at the bird on the bough.

"Wait-a-little-while." That was all. There were no trills, the notes were not clear — they were lifeless. The bird flew back to the cage, hopped into its corner, and stood for a long time hanging its head.

The cage is still a cage for although the door is open the bird never comes out.

THE BARGAIN

A RECLUSE once owned a magnificent dog; he loved it deeply because it was his only friend. All the virtues he failed to find in human beings he discovered in the animal,— gratitude, disinterestedness, affection, self-devotion, magnanimity, loyalty, honesty, and above all; fidelity. There was only one thing he longed for — that the faithful companion of his days and nights might be endowed with the power of speech. In the hope of accomplishing the miracle he had recourse to a famous witch who, upon learning his mission, shook her head doubtfully.

" What is it ? " he asked crestfallen. " You are not able to grant me my wish ? "

" Oh, yes," she answered, "but the penalty is a heavy one. The instant the dog speaks you will be stricken dumb. Moreover, the animal can speak but once."

The man pondered. The witch had placed an almost insuperable barrier between him and his desire. " But," he reflected, " if in

half a century I have not said all I have to say, it is reasonable to conclude I never will. The exchange is worth while, for by means of it I am forever prevented from quarreling, from uttering trivialities, from gossiping, and from talking about myself; while, on the other hand, I will have the inestimable pleasure of hearing the most gratifying speech I have ever listened to. I will at last attend in delight to the protestations of love and faithfulness that my dog's beautiful eyes have so often tried to express."

Having reasoned thus, he complied with the exorbitant condition imposed by the witch, and hurried home. At sight of him the dog came bounding forward and before he could put out his hand to caress it, began to speak. "Master," it said, fawning upon him, "now that you have obtained the power of speech for me, will you not see that I am granted the shape of man?"

The poor recluse could answer nothing — he was indeed dumb; dumb with bitter disappointment and unassuageable grief.

Speech had killed friendship.

A STOLEN HOUR

I LAY on the bank of a stream that in its own unconscious fashion looked up at the sky and laughed incessantly. All around me there was an indescribable beauty that gently and gracefully moved like a charming woman reclining at ease. I looked into the water, then up at the sky, then around me at the trees, the bushes, and the grass. My soul was saturated with delight, steeped in an appreciation of beauty, exquisitely contented and free. The bonds were loosened from my spirit which passed into the waters, flowed into the wind, and rose into the heavens.

The stream swung with as wide a curve as it pleased around the massive group of elm trees; the trees themselves reached out their branches unrestrainedly into the moving, illimitable air; the clouds swept and coiled and rocked and fled and massed and segregated at will; the bushes with a motion of deep breathing parted their thick foliage to show endless avenues running away from

them through the far, broad-bosomed woods; and a breath of incense from a starry branch stole like a secret current out into space; the shadows darkened, lightened, crowded, and scampered tremblingly apart from time to time.

A flower near me, scarcely three inches from the ground, nodded its yellow head unceasingly in agreement; along the length of the grass, little frisky quivers were forever darting; in the stream the bubbles never stopped pouting and tumbling and sailing away; curls of tangled foam fluttered coquettishly against my hand; a careless branch in its swing through the air tapped me nonchalantly on the forehead; and the slender grass as it shook at play romped boldly across my cheek.

At last I became so much a part of what was about me, so much one with the free and abandoned harmony rolling far and wide, that every discordant thought, every grating memory, every tuneless wish fled with the harsh clatter far away, and a music became audible; a music of ineffable sweetness, lucid as the lark's song, wide as the organ of the ocean, and high and pure as a hymn of grace, that sounded from among the clouds, from

the secret vistas, from the tinkling stream, from the rustling grass and nodding flowers, and from the depths of my soul.

It was a clear, glorious song of freedom.

Suddenly a brazen clang scattered my meditations. From a blackened tower on the city's outskirts a bell rang out, as harsh and clamorous as the city itself. A bitter ache seized on my soul. The old bonds began to settle about it, to tighten round it, to cut into it. Once more it was bound down to my body, and my body and mind were bound over to the laws and ways of the world.

I rose from the bank of the stream; everything was even more beautiful. But I was an alien: everything was changed.

For an instant, white forms twinkled here and there in the distant beauty of the trees and meadows and clouds. Again and again they twinkled, and finally as the last note of the bell rang out with a sullen shivering tumult, they vanished utterly away: lovely, unsullied shapes of air — my dreams.

MY GUEST

I MET a poor man and took him with me for a day of pleasure. "Why do you do this?" he asked. "Because I have so much and you have so little." He looked at me and smiled, and there was great wealth in his smile alone. It came from the depths of his honest, simple soul, and flashed more brightly, more radiantly than the scintillations from a treasure house of gold.

"Why do you look so unhappy?" he asked, quizzically studying my face.

"There is so much injustice," I answered.

"Injustice? Yes, I suppose there is. I had not thought about it."

"Well then, do not," I cried. "It is a maddening subject."

I took him to see a magician. The most marvelous things appeared incessantly from nowhere. My companion sat entranced; he gaped with wonder; he was lost in delicious amazement. I counted the moments — they seemed eternal.

I next took him to dinner. As each new dish appeared, he looked at me as if to say, "Friend, this is a dream, but I will play my

part." Then his smile would deepen and the viands would vanish.

"Why don't you eat?" he asked me. "I am not hungry," I answered. "I am never hungry." "I am sorry for you," he said.

Everything went in this fashion — the whole day. At the end of it I had nothing in my thoughts, in my heart, nothing; but in my purse, great riches — that is, again nothing, if not exchangeable. But on the sum I had invested in his behalf, he had realized a million per cent: just as the mere blowing of the wind, the falling of the rain, the shining of the sun are joy for the green twig and nothing for the dead one.

As we parted, he thanked me with tears in his eyes and said, "It isn't often, friend, that a rich man spends his day with a poor devil like me."

"Like you," I cried. "It is you who are rich and I who am poor."

He gave a great hearty, simple laugh as though we understood how to joke with each other, and throwing back his head walked briskly down the street as though the whole world belonged to him. I, on the contrary, went to my rooms and sat for a long time with my head bowed on my hands, owning nothing but the view inward upon my unsettled thoughts.

DESPAIR

I STOOD on the bank of a stream that murmured, "I am flowing, flowing on, and all goes with me." The waters were crowded with bodies, live bodies. There was among them an incessant commotion and confusion, as in a mass undergoing the process of fermentation towards change. The whole struggle seemed to be dominated by a spasm of the soul. I witnessed the most frantic gestures; every arm seemed to be reaching for something, every hand seemed to be grasping at something. There was shrieking — I could see the blood spout from the lacerated throats; there was grappling — I could hear the limbs crack; there was always writhing, lashing, twisting, groaning, whirling — oh, such effort, such conflict, such dashing about in the steadily onflowing stream. Some of the bodies twisted themselves free from the entangled mass and for awhile floated on top of the water; others, despite breathless struggling, could barely keep their heads aloft; some fought frantically,

shrieked desperately, then rolled their eyes in despair and disappeared.

The churning scene sickened me. I grew faint and sank into unconsciousness. When I awoke from my stupor there was no trace left of the horrible turmoil. Every sign of it had disappeared. No; there was a faint red in the water and a few fragments that floated away.

Oh, what a sadness seized my heart! The stream still murmured, "I am flowing, flowing on, and all goes with me." Only my grief did not pass.

THE PINNACLE

AS an object in the path of a maddened bull may be by chance, tossed high, so once a man, caught up in the sweep of a revolution, attained the pinnacle. He had always thought well of himself, but not so well as he was now thought of. Those excellent qualities and distinguishing marks which he had long ago discovered in himself became immediately visible to everybody else; and even others, which he had not been aware of, were proclaimed by the multitude. Not only were his moral and mental attributes extolled, but the shape of his head became the model of the day; the color of his eyes, the vogue; because he jerked when he walked, squinted when he smiled, and lisped when he spoke, all the world lisped, squinted, and jerked. Even the people whose teeth were long and crooked were no longer ashamed to show them because the teeth of the man on the pinnacle were so.

But at last the conditions at so high a point

became unbearable to him. "They have recognized my greatness," he said, as he looked with some contempt on the crowd bowing and worshiping far, far below; "that is all I wanted and now I will descend."

While the people were still worshiping with bowed heads, he slipped down and crept away. He smiled to think of their surprise and terror when they should find that their idol, their model, was gone. "I will come back, good sheep," he whispered, "but first I must have a frolic, for my limbs are stiff as wood with sitting straight so long."

He disguised himself and went off among strangers. Now he lisped and squinted and jerked all alone: what a relief it was! At first, too, it was pleasant not to be extolled for his greatness, lauded for his virtues, and commended for his wit.

But at last, having relaxed his stiffened sinews by scampering about as he pleased on the level ground, he began to miss and to yearn for the adulation he had received on the height. One day he returned as quietly as he had left to the spot where the people had worshiped him at the foot of the pinnacle. His purpose was to surprise them and to throw them suddenly into a state of great rejoicing.

stiff and great, so honored and so superior, he saw a figure with dangling arms and legs, with grinning mouth and idiot eyes. It was a dummy. And as they had done with him, so they were now doing with the dummy, worshiping and imitating. At the sight, his heart seemed to roll over like a creature in pain. He saw that the crowd worshiped, not the man, but the place. The hard glittering shell of vanity that had grown about his heart cracked and fell away.

BEYOND THE WALL

WHEN I was twenty years of age I used to pass on my way to and from my home, vast grounds enclosed in a high, stone, broadly capped wall that jealously guarded the interior from view. All I could see was several gray, ivy-covered towers and here and there a cluster of lacy branches nodding alluringly in the distance.

My imagination set to work upon this secret place and filled it with wonderful spots of beauty — marble statues and plashing fountains; broad winding paths bordered by fragrant bushes; venerable trees sweeping the ground with their shady branches; and everywhere beds of bright flowers and tall, waving grass.

I always walked slowly beside the high, old wall, beyond which I could hear a cool, scattered, rhythmic plash, the gay chirping of birds, and an occasional sound of subdued, happy voices. I always lingered here to dream and to wish I might actually behold what I

so pleasantly fancied; that I might follow those shady, well-kept paths, sit under those drooping, broad-boled trees; listen to the ever-singing waters of the fountain, and, finally, steal into the stately house with the towers and from its windows look out upon still other beautiful paths and flowers and fountains.

One morning as I passed, such a fragrance of delicate lilac came gushing over the wall, that all I fancied was more vivid than ever and my curiosity was stimulated anew. And all I could see was the tantalizing group of towers and the tall waving treetops.

In the evening when I returned, what was my surprise to find that the high, impenetrable, jealous wall was down. It was being torn away, and what before had been so closely guarded now lay unreservedly spread before my eyes. Alas! What was there? A few scattered trees, the thin tops of which had set me dreaming; a broad, unkept path that led up to a plain country house half fallen to decay; a pipe that carried water into a barrel — my cool, musical, plashing, stone-rimmed fountain; no marble statues, no bushes, no flowers — yes; in the corner by the fence, a little, struggling, neglected lilac bush that the spring had

coaxed into sudden bloom and on a weather-beaten bench, an old lady, talking to a decrepit servant.

I turned away, sad and thoughtful. Oh! If I had never seen beyond the wall.

THE STRANGE CART

First Man. Look at that horse! How it staggers, how it is beaten! It is dropping blood from its torn back! The load is too heavy for five horses! And look at the driver! What an agonized face! As if he once had been crucified.

Second Man. Yes — a strange horse and a strange driver; both have been dead.

First Man. What are you saying!

Second Man. Yes, they have been reincarnated.

First Man. Why, this is horrible! My flesh begins to creep.

Second Man. On the contrary, it is splendid; you should rejoice. It is an example of justice. Years ago I used to see those two, only then it was entirely different.

First Man. A less ghastly sight, I hope.

Second Man. No, it was worse then. That which we see as the horse now was the driver then and the driver was the horse. The driver, in those days, was a rich man and the horse a spirited animal, but at last it became paralyzed from blows and loads that were too heavy for it, and died from neglect. Shortly after, the owner died, and now we have this — characters in the tragedy reversed.

First Man. So now the horse drives the man and the man draws the horse. But such a heavy load! Can you see what it is?

Second Man. Oh, yes, I know. It is heavier than iron. It is the faults of the horse when he was a man and the virtues of the driver when he was a horse.

A DIVINE MOMENT

THERE is a moment when the soul expands — a moment when something inexplicable happens. We are walking along in the fields when as suddenly as the changing of the wind the visual beauty, pouring and splashing everywhere like hundreds of fountains, becomes transformed into a point of light that with an instantaneous dart touches the soul.

Or we are reading a book and at a certain phrase, like a spark from the living mind of the author, we are obsessed with exaltation; or we are talking to some one who listens well and believes us, who has a speaking eye, and then again, either from the glance upon us or from the friction of our own thoughts, leaps forth a flash like lightning, and the sting and the quickening is a moment of ecstasy for the soul.

Or it is at none of these times but simply while we dream alone, or when a task is well done or a hope conceived. At such a moment, we realize the incalculable height to

which the soul is destined, for it achieves the heavens; and the fathomless depths into which it may strike, for in that moment it touches the secret out of which all manifestation flows. Either the soul then expands until it embraces the universe or the universe reduces itself to an elixir and drops into the soul. Then all the meaning of sunlight and wind and ocean and earth and sky and all the purpose of life and hope and death, and all the light of virtue and justice, and all the grace of beauty and love, leave their illimitable domains and come to us. For an instant, we die into an unconscious state of resurrection — and all we remember afterwards is a rhapsodic sensation such as a ripening fruit may know in the luscious moment of mellowing, and a yearning for that warm, sweet, subtle aspiration that sent our souls bounding out, out, out,— a yearning for that vivid flash of enlightenment shot from all time and all space, that showed us of what endlessness above, beneath, in all directions, we are a part: that mysterious contact that without being explicable, explains.

At any time such a moment may come to us. Why does it come at all? Why so seldom? To answer were to destroy its ecstasy which is its essence.

THE RACK

A POET, feeling within himself the sublime gift of singing, began to pour out his soul in pure verse. "The world is good," he thought, "good and fair; but I will make it better and fairer. His eyes were clear and smiling, full of love and faith. He sang: the world listened.

"He is for us," said one.

"He is against us," said another.

"His views are true," said one.

"His views are false," said another.

"He is too original," said one.

"He is a plagiarist," said another.

"He is a pessimist."

"No, he is an optimist."

"He is an egoist."

"No, he is an altruist."

"He is a pagan.

"No, he is a Puritan."

"He should be caricatured."

"No, he should be crowned."

And finally, "His works will live."

"No, his works will perish utterly."

At the end of five years, the poet's eyes were confused and dim, distrustful and bitter. At the end of ten years, he was still singing because he could not stop. The world was still listening in the old way.

One day, in the midst of the torture to alleviate his suffering, he made merry. He had himself put upon a rack and torn to pieces.

FRIENDSHIP

A LARGE diamond that gleamed in the dark like a clear eye, having been subjected to frightful pressure, at last burst into a thousand pieces.

"Ah," sighed a lesser jewel as green as the sea, "you have destroyed your value."

"Yes," was the reply, "but I have made a friend happy."

THE VAGRANT

MY heart was boiling with wrath and confusion, my soul was aching with sadness and despair. Everywhere injustice, nowhere a redress.

I walked out into the keen air — the tumult in my heart began to subside. "O just current," I cried, "O fountain of pure vigor! thou flowest wildly, freely, thou art for all, thou dost not choose."

At this moment, I heard footsteps behind me — a wretched creature was shuffling along the road. I waited for him, and when he came beside me I put my hand on his shoulder from which the rags had fallen away and said, "My poor fellow, life has served you ill, for no matter what your sins have been, you have not deserved to come to this. No, there is no justice. Even the air that stimulates me is cutting you cruelly. Here, take my coat; it is all I have to give."

The vagrant stared at me without a word; he did not understand. He did not thank me

and did not smile. "He has forgotten how," I thought, and went shivering on my way, contented that I had done a good deed.

The next day I walked out again, briskly, to keep warm. When I reached the open country, the whipping wind almost lashed the skin from my face, the very blood in my veins grew cold. "Oh, if I only had my coat!" I cried. But the thought of my good deed and the happiness I had given another warmed my heart. As I struggled along, I heard the rattle of horses' hoofs on the frozen road; a shining equipage came dashing toward me. The horses gleamed like satin. the trappings glistened and sang. Holding the reins was a man wrapped from head to foot in magnificent sables. But he was cold, he checked his horses, and beat his hands about, crying out with pain. Again there was the sound of footsteps behind me; shuffling along the road came the same wretched creature I had met the day before. Over his rags he wore the warm coat I had given him. He did not see me, his eyes were fixed on the flashing harness of silver, on the horses gleaming like satin, on the master dressed like a prince who was still beating his hands about and groaning with pain. The man in rags

limped to the edge of the road and, drawing some dry twigs together, set fire to them. The man in sables ran up to the crackling fire and held his hands over it until it began to die down. Again the man in rags limped up, tore off his coat and threw it into the flames. The other, having warmed his hands thoroughly, jumped back into his carriage, and without a word drove off to the music of the silver trappings.

And the wretched man in rags stood and stared after him. I went up to him and spoke to him, but he did not see, he did not hear *me*. His eyes were radiant, he was happy; yes, he knew how to smile, and in a low, contented, chuckling voice he was murmuring, "I thank you."

A MEMORY

SUNSHINE slipping across the floor in the early morning. It is deep and pale by turns with the scurrying of light clouds in the high, wind-flicked sky. It glides past my feet and hides in a corner, fades out, and then in an instant is lying in a broad, gold band again.

Stealing back into my heart as I watch it, comes the memory of days in the sweet beginning of youth when across my book fell the early morning sunlight. Between it and my heart there was a bond of fellowship; at sight of it, a smile used to ripple through my soul, a smile of heralded conquering. The walls of my room seemed to fall away and I was in a conjured space as wide as the width of the world since the beginning, and as deep as the deepest thought of all men. Something new, something fresh, moved in my veins; an inspiration, high, pure, quick, hovered over my head with wings waiting but to spread, clap, and fly. And that yellow ray, fallen from the fathomless, clear morning sky,

washed with the fresh morning air, stole up upon my hand trembling to lay itself to the deed, stole up onto the open page and mingled its light with the light that flashed from eternally shining tales of greatness. There it lay, pointing to the work of the sun-crowned Greeks as if itself were pointing back to itself. "O light," I cried, in those fresh mornings in the beginning of life, "O light from Heaven and from the minds of men! O Apollo! O Greeks! be my symbol, be my guide on the everlasting road of art you cut through the wilderness of ages."

It is sweet now, when again the early sun comes slipping in among sad thoughts of the night, to remember that prayer and that faith of long ago.

THE MYSTERIOUS MISSION

THERE is an incessant patter outside my window, the light tip, tip of women, the resolute tramp of men. As constant as the beat of the sea on the shore is this passing of human feet. There is a fascination in the sound, like music heard in a dream, the motif of which is never fully revealed. The pulse of this never-ending march is intimate and yet inscrutable, half joyful and half sad; it awakens a longing in me to know what is the power that is driving this army on so that they do not once pause, but make their rounds incessantly.

There it goes, the cane and the footfall, the faint humming murmur and the shuffling.

It is the close of day. For a moment the reflection of the setting sun flickers brilliantly against the window panes. It disappears and the sky is left naked and gray. Through the shadow as through the sunlight thiob the untiring footfalls. "Where are you going," my heart cries out. "Surely where I have never been. On what mission? Surely there

is something awaiting you that I have never found."

What is this? One of the crowd making its quick, eager purposeful pattering has stopped at my gate. He is coming up my walk; his step still rings out gladly, hurriedly. He stops at my door — he is seeking me. It is a friend who often comes to exchange the simple courtesies of the day and then returns to his modest home.

The words recur to me —"Surely you are going where I have never been; surely there is something awaiting you which I have never found." They die away to a faint echo and I smile as at a fading illusion.

THE SLAP

JUSTIN.— What is that mark on the face of our friend Augustus?

Christian.— He has just been slapped such a blow, it resounded all over the street!

Justin.— Do tell us about it.

Christian.— I will. Augustus was walking amicably along, twirling a cane with one hand and petting his moustache with the other in both of which occupations he is exceedingly elegant. A beggar approached him and said something to him. Augustus instantly gave him money. "How shall I spend it?" asked the beggar. "What is that to me?" said Augustus, trying to move on "Let me tell you something about myself," persisted the beggar. "Let me pass," cried Augustus. "Let me go with you —" "Off, I say!" "Why did you give me this?" "To get rid of you." "What is it?" "Charity, you fool!" "Charity, you fool!" repeated the beggar. Then he began to shriek. He dashed the money into the street and burst into a tirade. "You

spider!" he screamed, "enmeshed in hypocrisy! You have thrown me a coin: for food; for drink; for poison: it makes no difference to you. You have bought yourself a great deal of salve; you have given me scarcely anything. You have made another deposit toward a comfortable seat in the hereafter. You have anointed your arm so that it may reach up and stroke your bump of egoism. You have indulged a habit, the habit of tossing to your starving brother, your despairing Christian brother, a penny of your surplus." Then fell the slap and the beggar walked deliberately away. Did you ever hear of such a thing?

Justin.— No! What a humiliation! before everybody!

Christian.— The beggar was insane: there is no doubt of it.

A SUMMER STORM

THE calling of the birds which this morning in the sunlight was so blithe, now in the gathering storm seems portentous. The fir trees, with their variegated, green, pendant tufts hang with increased dejection awaiting the beat of the rain; in the trees the blackbirds settle thicker and thicker, opening their long, polished beaks to emit a sharp, insistent, grating cry. The hawks, possessing the whole heavens in their boding sweep, sag nearer and nearer to the earth with each unhurried circling. The foaming black clouds, rolling up upon the grayish blue, rumble from time to time, while now and then a heavy drop of rain falls. The sparrows and catbirds are settling faster and faster in the branches, the chimney-swifts are verging nearer and nearer to the deep, safe mouth of the chimney, the cows are lowing across the fields, the dogs have left the warm patches in the grass and have crept under the benches on the porch.

Nothing is at ease, nothing is restful—everything waits. The rumbling grows more frequent, the cries of the birds quicker, the swaying of the branches wider and deeper, the odors more pungent. Another glance at the sky — where are the ominous clouds? They are gone; the next instant the sun bursts forth and the brilliant life of the summer afternoon is everywhere and in everything resumed.

THE SPIRIT OF JOY

"I HAVE not enough joy to keep me alive!" That was the moan day and night of a wretched man, and indeed he wore a half-dead expression that made everybody who looked into his face shudder and weep. The corners of his mouth were drawn down as if with the weight of discontent; there was a forbidding scowl between his eyes, and the eyes themselves were fastened upon his breast as though he were always looking there, in upon himself and away from others.

One night as he tossed about on his bed, tortured by thoughts more painful to the mind than live coals to the body, he was startled to perceive a sudden faint glow that gradually deepened through the darkness of the room. Next there was a rustling as of wings, and at last a spirit made itself manifest. The wretched man rubbed his eyes in astonishment, for he beheld a more brilliant and beautiful creature than his fancy could have summoned. It seemed to be made of a pure white light and

to tremble with an ecstatic agitation, its eyes were indescribably glorious — from them emanated in all directions the rose-colored radiance that had preceded its coming.

"Day after day and night after night," said the spirit to the man, "I have heard your moan, 'I have not enough joy to keep me alive!' Truly thou art in danger of death, for joy is the food of the soul and thy dull, hungry eyes show how greatly thou lackest it. So at last I have come to thee."

"O divine spirit," cried the man, "help me! My soul is *in extremis*."

"Then come with me," said the spirit. The man followed meekly as in a dream. A short journey brought them to a chamber from the walls of which flashed a blinding light. The room was literally filled with gold. "This is my treasure-house," said the guide. "I am the spirit of joy."

"And is this room filled with joy?" cried the man eagerly.

"This room," answered the spirit with a smile, "is but the ante-chamber. The bed of the sea could not hold nor the breadth of the sky cover the joy I guard, for it is limitless."

"Then thou wilt grant me enough to live," pleaded the man.

"Nay, more," answered the spirit. They entered the wonderful room; it was stored with hearts of gold, and the hearts were filled with a white light like that of which the spirit was made.

"All of this light is joy," said the spirit; "open thy heart wide and receive of it as much as thou wilt."

The man obeyed and as his heart began to fill he raised his eyes from his breast and turned them in a free, intent glance in all directions. "I have joy enough," he cried at last, half swooning with delight. "Let me look closer at these wonderful caskets."

The spirit smiled and assented. Suddenly a cry broke from the man's lips. A revelation had swept into his soul. The caskets were the hearts of his wife, his children, his friends, his fellowmen. Awestruck, he stood facing the radiant creature beside him. "Go!" bade the spirit, "thou hast not come far, not farther than the narrow circle within which thou livest. Thou has found in others' joy thine own, never again wilt thou lack it; thou hast raised thine eyes from thine own breast, and now wilt thou smile; thou wast perishing, now art thou saved." And the spirit vanished, not away but into the depths of the man's heart.

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THE STATUE

TWILIGHT is silently pouring her somber tide into the crystalline, white depths of day, staining with opaque dusk the glittering, flashing transparency in which the sun rolls. Shadows seem to flow from the whole breadth of the sky and to mingle in one voluminous sheet; they creep out from the corners, find me and caress my senses into quiet. I drop my book, I fold my arms and the wings of meditation begin to rustle lightly through the room. Opposite me is a statue of a little girl, a sweet, simple thing, *La Paseggiata.* A long fringed shawl over her arm trails behind her; in one hand she holds a flower, in the other an open fan; her head is set proudly and gaily on her slender, babyish neck, like a bird's; her smile flits so lightly in her eyes and on her lips that, but a glance, and it is in my own heart. There breathes from that mute marble such a soul as is in the first spray of a fountain or the first fragrance of a rose. This little girl, always there, always smiling

down on me, has become the simple guardian of my activity. I ply the energies of mind and soul under the auspices of her innocence.

Now in the twilight, shadows fold about the shawl and over the bare shoulders and across the eyes, and it seems to me that long, skilful hands are moving busily up and down the white figure, now touching the young brow, now the sweet eyes, now the dimpled hand; up and down, up and down they move, with such love, such care; they are the sculptor's hands; but they are dead, they are dust, and now they fall away and melt back into the still twilight. A slight shiver runs through me: there stands the little marble girl, and the hands that fashioned her are dead. I never knew them, I never pressed them, yet diligently skilfully they worked in my behalf; and I, a stranger, reap the fruit of such proud toil. Suddenly, like a light flashing there when we had peered for it here, comes this thought to me: "What we do is not for ourselves, and our reward is in the doing." After this twilight, never can work and purpose seem the same to me.

THE BOND OF IGNORANCE

I STOOD under a majestic tree; it seemed to rustle sadly, "Oh, what sublime things could be said of me, and what insufficient things are said! Do you not understand me, you who walk around me, gaze at and name me? Is it that you do not see what I am? Must I die unknown because you who have found me have no power to speak the truth? Were I not dumb, there would be such a Song of Trees that among other songs it would be like the divine flute of the nightingale to the cawing of a crow; and the shining ray of its significance for the soul of man would be among the lights by which his perplexed perception finds its uncertain way, like a valley heaped with diamonds among ditches filled with dust."

The rustling grew sadder, the waving of the branches more despairing. I walked away. I came to the seashore. What a lament! It rolled from far and wide and spread everywhere. "Men have named me Water,"

moaned the deep, "they have named me the Ocean, the Sea; centuries ago a race peopled me with marvelous creatures, with sea-nymphs, with dolphins, with gods; but who among men has understood me, who has touched the meaning of my soul? They look at me, then back into themselves, and they sing of the ocean, of the sea in their own hearts. The swallow that dips to my wave, the sailor that rides on my bosom, to me they are the same, they do not understand me. I am a mighty thing, a mighty inspiration, but whom, what shall I inspire?" The lament grew sadder, the breaking of the waves more desperate.

I left the shore. As I walked along, above me floated a mass of clouds. They were moving toward the west, and in the west there was a glory that made my heart beat with a terrible delight. A drop of rain fell from the clouds, another, another. On my ears fell a soft, melancholy whispering: "It has never been discovered, it has never been said. We appear with the dawn and sail with the day and fade with evening, over and over and over, waiting and waiting. How white we are! What a motion we have! There is something else, the essence of us, which no

man has understood: as far from the truth as we are above the earth are those who have sought our secret. It is well they believe and applaud each other, for we who know could not applaud them. Thus it will ever be: we shall carry this divine demonstration above the whole wide world, but it will be as if it were not, for men have tongues but are without eyes; the eyes of the soul."

The whispering grew more insistent, darkness began to fall. A form came slowly, painfully toward me: it was an old beggar. I slipped my arm in his. "Do you understand the trees, the sea, the clouds?" I asked. He did not answer, he was surprised.

"I do not, and you do not; then in our ignorance let us walk together, brother."

THE SORROWING HEART

THERE came into the crowded street every day a woman so sorrowful looking that little children would tell their mothers of the sad-eyed woman they had met while at play, and young girls who in their care-free promenades chanced to glance into her face were disturbed in their sleep by unhappy dreams. A poet who was meditating a lyric that began, "The world is a merry place," one day met her, looked into her eyes, and unconsciously changed his song to, "The world is full of sorrow." She always stood where the greatest crowd passed; she always seemed to be looking for something, looking straight into the eyes of people for it. She seemed never to find it.

One day two youths engaged in a quick quarrel. One of them was stabbed to the heart. The crowd gathered about him; they tore open his shirt; they saw a vivid gash from which the blood trickled slowly and ominously. Men burst into tears, women fainted. Words of pity were heard on all

sides. The wounded youth was gently gathered up and carried away to be tenderly ministered to. Apart from the crowd, silently looking on, stood the sorrowful woman.

Next day a cry went up from the thronging street, "A woman is slain!" Everybody gathered about the spot where lay a huddled, wretched figure. She too, like the youth, had been stabbed to the heart. At sight of the bleeding gash, again men burst into tears and women swooned; again there were sighs of pity and tender ministering.

"I have seen this woman before," said some one.

"Yes," said another, "she is the sad-eyed creature who always stood among us, looking as if she were begging for something."

"She has inflicted the wound herself," remarked a third.

The blood kept flowing straight out from her heart. Gentle hands lifted her head and stroked her cheek. One young girl bent down and kissed the white lips. "Who is she?" she asked.

The woman opened her eyes. "Ah," she sighed. "I see, it is to the visible wound you give your tears."

"Who is she?" was asked again, this time

by a youth on whose head the wreath of illusions had not yet commenced to fade.

"I know her," whispered a haggard-looking creature; her own face was full of a tragic yearning.

"Yes," was the faint reply. "You know me. I am the Silent Sorrows of the Heart."

THE TORCH AND THE LAMP

TWO travelers met at the beginning of their careers, confessed to each other their ambition to serve man in the highest way, then parted and went in opposite directions.

Twenty years passed. The travelers met again. One of them carried a torch from which floated a flame that veiled everything in a rose-colored glow; the other carried a lamp which by means of its intense white light penetrated all depths and all distances, revealing the details and secret mechanisms of every object.

The man with the torch was at the head of a triumphal band composed of men who also carried torches that threw off rose-colored flames. The man with the lamp was being cruelly jeered at and stoned by an infuriated mob. His garments were torn, his face lacerated, and the hand that supported the lamp was crushed and bleeding.

"Hold, brother!" cried the man with the eager following, "What is your fault?"

"I know not my fault," answered the other sadly. "I have done nothing but search out truth in the heart of man and nature and reveal it, that man might be content to die. May I, in turn, ask why you have so triumphed and have such a worshiping crowd at your heels?"

"Brother," answered the torch-bearer, "the truth that you have revealed that man might be content to die, I have veiled that man might live content."

A GOOD LAUGH

IS the man mad that he goes about chuckling and sometimes laughing uproariously? "Ha, ha, ha!" That is all one gets from him.

"My good fellow." "My dear friend." "My honored confrère." You can go no further; he cuts you off with "Ha, ha, ha!" "Be my adviser." "Be my esteemed guest." "Add your name to this godly enterprise." Nothing but "Ha, ha, ha!" till he is red in the face, till his voice is hoarse, till his breath comes in gasps, till his sides almost burst. You wonder if he takes you for a joke or if he has lost his wits.

Beautiful women pet him. "Ha, ha, ha!" Royalty courts him. "Ha, ha, ha!"

This is the history of the man.

He is the son of a prince, not the son whose entrance into life was proclaimed by the triumphal firing of cannon, but the son whose birth was hidden away as the traces of crime are hidden. He became an outcast, he starved. "Give me food!" he cried. "I

am the son of a king." Those who heard him laughed in his face, "Ha, ha, ha!" That was what they gave him to eat.

"They are right," he thought. One must earn one's place among one's fellows." So he worked till his back cracked, his hands bled, and his brow sweat.

Again he went to the elect of fortune, for with the blood of kings in his veins his heart yearned towards them. "Take me among you," he cried. "I am worthy now." And he showed his knotted coarse hands and his curved back. But all he received was a scornful glance and a soul-crushing "Ha, ha, ha!"

"What have I done?" he cried, unable to understand. "My life is clean of sin — I have broken no commandment — and by the sweat of my brow I earn my bread. Then why do those people with the delicate souls and subtle minds forever draw away from me? What have I done? Or what is it I have left undone?"

One day the prince died and on his death-bed bought an easy conscience with a stroke of his pen — he left a fortune to the outcast.

For a time he was dazzled, the outcast, and looked about him like one who has been

carried blindfold to a strange place. But in time the luxurious stain in his blood corrupted him. From the depths of deprivation, he suddenly ascended to the heights of depravity. His hands grew soft, his back straight, his eye dull and sly, his heart rotten.

Then it was that people began to solicit his influence in a godly enterprise, or to head their list of guests with his name, or to seize his arm as he walked down the street, or to court a nod of his head as if he were a Jove. Then it was that beautiful women who had mocked his honesty and toil decked themselves in all their witchery to be worthy of his dishonor and deceit. Then it was that the whole world came to him. Then it was that he began to laugh " Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! " till his voice grew hoarse, till his head swam, till the tears poured down his cheeks, till his sides cracked, till he fairly choked.

Then it was that the delicate-souled people, the subtle-minded people, founders of churches and schools, said, " He takes us for a joke. He is a madman."

And still he laughed.

THE DYING EGOIST

A MAN who was riding on the edge of a precipice misguided his horse and fell into the abyss. He realized that he was mortally wounded, and that before the sunset the vultures would be stripping the flesh from his dead body. At first he shrieked out time after time: he was crazed. Then, when his force was spent, he began to think, and his thoughts led him to blaspheme. For years it had seemed to him that he had understood all things clearly, but now in a moment all was confusion. He had devoted himself to the cause of humanity, and even now he had been bent on a mission of mercy. He was carrying the savings of a lifetime to a city destroyed by fire, so that the maimed inhabitants might die in peace. To be crushed out of existence on such an errand!

"My God!" he cried, "I thought Thou wert at my right hand; I thought Thou didst approve me, that Thou didst rejoice in the merciful aim of my life. But no, Thou wert mocking me, deceiving me; and now Thou

hast crushed me as the foot crushes an ant. *My* God? No, not mine. I forswear Thee. Thou hast no purpose, thou art a juggler. And I — oh! confusion! mercy! mercy!"

In the midst of his raving, he heard a low moan. He raised his head and looked about him: he had forgotten his horse. There it lay, its magnificent frame shattered, its noble head, the throne of a fine intelligence, a shapeless, bleeding mass; but the eyes were still alive; they were fixed on him with a look of such love, of such gentle pleading and forgivenness, that he burst into sobs. Then came to this dying man the thought: How much more nobly that animal is leaving life than I am. The Creator expended as much ingenuity upon that lithe, fleet body and that majestic eye as upon mine. In all my missions he has been my minister, and now with me he is called upon peremptorily to return his life to its Giver. He was born, he has served, he has demanded nothing, and he dies, moaning at the impulse of physical agony, but without a protest from the mind. He even turns upon me, who misguided him, an eye of love. With me, the mind is the trouble. I have used it to fashion for myself a creed of egoism that should be my stay

in this world and my reward in the next, that should lift me from the mass and make of me an everlasting entity; for I, who was evolved from nothing, am dear unto myself and cannot part from myself, but must always dream that *I*, *I*, *I* must always be. And I, who have chattered in the ear of God demanding incessantly that He think of *me*, that He need *me*, that He reward *me*, I who said all and have heard nothing from Him,— now on the threshold of death I curse Him — yet not Him, but my own abominable, selfish, egoistic imagination. And I, because of this false imagination, die with curses on my lips and confusion in my brain, while this animal, which is as true as the eye of the Heaven and as simple as the light thereof, dies with love in his last glance. My God, mine once more, Thou hast not spoken, Thou hast not deceived nor mocked me. I have deceived and mocked myself."

At sunset, a flock of rapacious vultures began to hover in a circling, eddying descent above two dead bodies. At last with shrieks of delight they settled for an orgy in the depths of the ravine. Some gorged themselves on the horse and some on the man.

SNOW

IT was Christmas eve. The white-haired doctor threw himself down in an easy-chair before his window, utterly fatigued but tingling with pride that the difficult case he had been watching for weeks, contrary to all odds and all predictions against it, had turned out a success, a scientific and a financial success. "I will sit here comfortably until teatime," he said aloud, "and watch the snowstorm."

Since childhood, he had always experienced a peculiar sense of delight as the ground began to whiten, the blackened branches to hold little chains of spotless heaps, and the air to spin with whirling flakes; a sense of fairy tales becoming possible, of the real world disappearing as the ground and roofs were disappearing now, of the imaginary taking its place like the dazzling, usurping sheet of snow.

On this occasion, besides the more remote feelings, he was conscious of an immediate sense of snugness, of possessing everything he wanted.

He stood up, threw his shoulders back, thrust his hands into his pockets, and laughed aloud. He laughed because he felt in every atom of his body the refreshing difference between this chaste, blithe, yet unconfused scene and the crowded picture of misery at the hospital — a picture which, if reproduced by a painter, would be called bad art because there was no contrast; but here was the contrast, the clean, pure, all-invading snow and the pungent wind blowing from the very jaws of health. The doctor, pleasantly fatigued, sank into a most elusive, mystic revery, a revery as delicate as a flake of snow which dissolves as it touches the substantial.

With marvelous rapidity, the white tide rose, surging about the familiar, homely objects; with a marvelous, unceasing rush fell the deluge of flakes, striking through space like a gigantic waterfall; with a marvelous sweetness and kindliness growing in his soul, the white-haired doctor watched this bewildering scene of enchantment. His spare, clear-cut face, with the alert, steel-blue eyes, became transformed by a childlike innocent smile of delight; his hands, so firm and capable, began to tremble with a certain fervor stirring in his blood: again he laughed aloud and sank deeper into his beautiful revery.

The snow piling so steadily, drifting so lightly, convolving like elves in a magic dance, —this pure, beautiful, glistening snow entered his heart and buried all the wickedness, all the self-seeking, all the sordidness, all the conventional slavishness, all the pride, all the falsehoods, all the unmanliness, all the ungodliness; it entered his blood and set the crimson drops to seething, to bubbling, to rushing like itself; it entered his memory and overspread all the confused objects in that crowded storehouse with its pure, bountiful, glistening waves; and lo! upon his heart and his mind and his soul, so spotlessly white now, there shone a clear blue light, the light of his youthful dreams and intentions, his boyish ardor and truth, his unstained self-respect his love of man and of God; and lo! upon that calm but increasing field of whiteness and upon that cloud of flakes that seemed to be boiling in their frenzied hurry, and upon his skilled hand as it rested on the windowsill, and upon his brow where the white hair curled, and upon his cheeks which the withering fingers of age had already clutched, there burst in a thousand wide-falling rays, as from a rosy sun, a soft red, unearthly glow that set him quivering in an ecstasy. It was like

a blush on a virgin's cheek. Without, that soft red light upon the spotless snow; within himself, the blue flame fed by his youthful ardor and his love of man and God.

"It has come at last," he murmured, and tears of joy gushed from his shining eyes. "It has come again after all these years of struggle — this flood of light and warmth and love, this beatific mood, this stainless passion, this wave from the infinite, this star among the clouds that pass, this dream that is real; they have burst forth again — these flowers of my soul that had ceased to bloom. I am the same I was, unchanged through all the changes; I am found again after wandering so many roads. Found! Found! The same! The same!" And the white-haired doctor clasped himself in his own arms and laughed a soft, low laugh of recognition.

And higher and higher piled the snow, and deeper and deeper grew the rosy light.

"I have moved through the years of toil like a worm, but here are the wings at last — wings to sail through the heavens of love, through the illimitable fields of human need. Praise be to God! And the wings are as white as snow, and the tips of them are touched with the rose-colored ray. What the youth planned

the man will do; what the youth dreamed the man will find real; what the years have given this hour shall return. Oh, my heart aches with this fever, this passion, this ecstasy!"

And lo! like letters of fire upon a white curtain, the stars shone through the dropping sheet of snow and spelled the one word, "Charity." Charity — one word — it stretched across the whole broad sky. The doctor fell upon his knees, the tears streamed down his cheeks. And higher and higher piled the snow, and deeper grew the rosy light, and brighter and brighter twinkled the stars in the one word, charity.

Suddenly he heard his name called. He staggered to his feet. A crowd had gathered in the drifts beneath his window; they knew him, they were calling him — who were they? They stood in the dazzling snow, and a broad ray of the red light revolved slowly and fell upon them. My God, what a horrible crowd! What a rabble! What rags, what despair, what sunken cheeks, what hollow eyes! They were calling him, in a chorus of weak, lifeless voices.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Who are you who have come into my dream?" They did not answer; they stood with bowed

heads, huddled together in rags and sorrow.

"Ah!" a cry of recognition burst from his throbbing heart. He knew them now; yes, he had sat by the bedside of each of them. He had sat by the crippled boy with the calloused hands, the twisted body, and the shrivelled foot; by the blind girl standing there like a statue with her eyelids lowered, her hands reaching out, feeling in space, as it were, for her lost sight, trying to reclaim light from the darkness, smiling trustingly, smiling a wonderful smile that begged and humbly said, "I thank you"; he had sat by that woman with the marvelous light of motherhood upon her wasted features and the lines of agony and deprivation around her drooping mouth; by that man with failure inscribed upon his receding forehead, with failure branded upon his slinking shoulders; he had sat beside the mad youth with the god-like head, a dome of confusion, who talked forever of his palace and starved in a garret; beside that beautiful girl with the lithe full throat, with the poppies in her dead-black hair and the evil light in her subtle eyes; he had sat beside all these and looked into their hearts, deep, deep down into those abysses of pain and darkness, into those hells

of torment; he had heard the cries and the prayers, the hungry shrieks and the rabid yells,— he had heard, but he had not harkened. And now they were calling him, and the one word, charity, was stretching luminously across the broad, white sky; and everywhere the flakes were heaping up, like good deeds and holy wishes.

"My God!" cried the doctor, "these people belong to me and to me alone; no one else knows them as I know them; but never before was I worthy, not until this hour worthy. The time has come, the time to prove myself, the time for the youth to crown the white-haired man.

"Wait!" he called tenderly to the crowd beneath his window, and from every quarter of the earth and from every corner of the sky he heard the echo, "Wait." He had whispered it: the echo seemed to hiss it.

Trembling in every limb, as once when he carried a dead man, he rose from his chair and went to his desk. The rosy light fell in a flood about him. From his desk he took a strong-box, and from the strong-box, gold; he returned to the window: the sorrowful, ragged crowd had obeyed him — they had believed him, they had waited. He took a

handful of the glistening coins shining with a light that to the human eye is unequaled: he cast them into the snow: a gasp of joy went up higher and higher and lost itself in the clouds. Another handful, another, another, another — until the bags were empty and the ground was full. What a glorious sight! the immaculate snow, the yellow shining gold, the rosy ray.

"Learn to rest," he cried to the cripple.

"Learn to read," he cried to the blind girl.

"Learn to enjoy," he cried to the mother.

"Learn to hope," he cried to the failure.

"Learn to have," he cried to the mad youth.

"Learn to pray," he cried to the Magdalen.

And he bowed his head, and a thrill that seemed to come from contact with heaven itself shook the very foundations of his being.

From the crowd a murmur went up — "Christlike!" He almost swooned with joy.

But the flakes of snow were no longer falling; from all parts of the sky they were drifting together, something was taking shape out of them between heaven and earth. "Christlike!" went up the murmur a second time, and lo! between heaven and earth stretched a cross of dazzling snow, of blinding

purity; and the limbs were tipped with a rosy light. And a third time the crowd murmured, "Christlike!" and the doctor swooned with joy.

Or did he wake? What was this sinking, sickening agony of his brain and in his heart? What was this dread that chilled him to the marrow, this terror that turned him to stone? What had happened? He clutched his head, he shook as with the ague, he gasped — he was choking, he was lost.

The room was dark. Tottering from his chair, he felt his way to the desk. "Like a worm," he muttered, "through all these years of toil, like a worm." He took a key from his pocket, he struck a match; he took out his strong-box; he fitted the key, he raised the lid. Struggling for breath, he looked in; then like one waking from a horrible nightmare, he sank into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

His gold was safe!

Weak and dazed, with the sensations of a man reprieved from death, he returned to the window. The vision of the piling whiteness and the rose-colored light persisted in his memory. He looked out — the snow was gone.

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